

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE KINGS COUNTY RADIO CLUB



August 2015

"Minutus cantorum, minutus balorum, minutus carborata descendum pantorum."

Volume 2, Issue 8

Next Club Meeting:

Tuesday, September 8th, 2015
at 7:30PM

Our weekly Nets meet on Sunday at 11 AM on 28.380 (10 meters) and Tuesday on 146.730 PL 88.5 (2 Meters) at 9 PM

Next Club Activities:

The KCRC 2015 Annual Picnic will be September 20th, at 12 noon.

Further details will be posted on www.KC2RC.com and www.KingsCountyRadio.com as they develop.

ARRL Membership Dues Increase!

Well, those old dependables: death, taxes and price hikes—things you can always depend upon. Effective next year, ARRL dues go up \$10. That's \$49.00 a year, if you are interested in a Lifetime membership you can look up the new price there.

Annual KCRC Picnic!

Well, it's that time again for the annual KCRC Picnic! It's set for September 20th at 12:00 PM at Manhattan Beach. The entrance is on Oriental Blvd and Ocean Ave. All attendees are asked to bring something with them no more than \$20 in value.

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A list of requested items can be found at www.kingscountyradioclub.com/kcrc-picnic/

Remember to take lots of snapshots for the Newsletter!

Amateur Radio Vanity Call Sign Fee to Disappear in September

The first day that you can request a vanity call sign for free will be Thursday, September 3rd, 2015.

You can't go wrong with something that costs \$0!

The Kings County Radio Club is at www.KC2RC.com or www.KingsCountyRadioClub.com

KCRC is an ARRL affiliated club (see: www.ARRL.org)

Minutes of the August 2015 KCRC Meeting,

August 11th, 2015

The monthly meeting was called to order by Howard, N2GOT.

10 Meter Net - 10 Meters continues to suffer from poor propagation issues, but we continue to have a healthy local turnout of participants.

2 Meter Net -- Richard, KA2KDQ, reported that at least a dozen people checked in and the repeater is running well. Juan, KC2QNK, suggested that the club website should be mentioned during the Net.

Treasury Report -- Richard, KA2KDQ, reported that as of the August meeting there was \$1,151.86 in the bank.

Old Business - N2GOT mentioned that although Field Day 2015 is over, it's never too early to plan for the next Field Day.

There was some discussion of our Club's participation in next years "National Night Out".

Howard N2GOT announced the purchase and installation of a 100 watt power amplifier for our new Repeater. A vote was taken regarding the purchase of a separate receiver pre-amplifier to improve our receiver's input sensitivity. This item will cost \$90. The vote passed and the pre-amp will be installed as soon as possible, after it is delivered. Other future components for the Repeater were discussed, in a preliminary manner.

A membership drive was again discussed. Roy AC2GS has provided the Club with an up to date list of all local new Amateur Radio License holders, as well as an introductory letter promoting the benefits of KCRC membership and offering a discounted first year Club membership. Mitch N2RGA volunteered to handle the printing of the final paperwork and mass mailings to Brooklyn and Queens based new Amateur Radio Operators and hopefully expand this campaign if its initial run is successful.

Regarding our efforts to reregister our Club's Repeater as KC2RC with Metrocor, the local frequency allocation committee, Mitch, N2RGA, reported that he was told that he needed to submit the technical specifications of the new repeater to the repeater coordinator.

Our 2015 KCRC Picnic was discussed. Up to date information should be made available at our www.kingscountyradioclub.com web site.

New Business - A suggestion was made to consider a summertime Club event at Montauk next year.

The session was ended at 9:23 PM.

FM Repeater Etiquette For The 21st Century

(So, Now What? - Part 3)

FM Repeater etiquette is not that different from any other form of etiquette, except that you have to allow for people listening in, that you'll never know. Each FM Repeater *community* has its own characteristics. Some are strictly "G" rated places. Some are PG-13 and occasionally "R". Then there are some that are decidedly "X" rated - the swear words can fly wild and furiously and other members of the group will appreciate your creative use of Anglo-Saxon obscenities, even if the FCC won't. Remember that the FCC allows us the privilege to transmit on these frequencies, it is not a right that you were born with. Treat the privilege with a bit of respect!

Most people on Repeaters are there for their own amusement. They are there for some entertaining and perhaps thought provoking conversations. They are there to relax and to have fun, as are you. These guidelines are just guidelines, not something etched into a tablet and brought down from a mountain top. Take them as suggestions from someone who has been around these places for a while. Relax and have fun with it all, no one is grading you on any of this. As in most cases, be a polite, decent person and others will treat you similarly.

A relatively new Ham in the area often tells others on the air, that the FCC gave them a license to TALK, not to listen. But this is NOT a license to broadcast, it is a license to communicate. There is an old proverb from Abraham Lincoln that has its roots in the Old Testament, that goes something like this - "Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak and to remove all doubt.". Silence may be golden, but if you were interested in just listening you could have remained a *Short Wave Listener* and saved yourself the trouble of passing an exam. Listen for a while, get "the lay of the land", the interplay of personalities, and when the opportunity presents itself BETWEEN their transmissions, introduce yourself with your call sign. They will most likely acknowledge you and ask you to standby and then invite you into the "rotation". Try not to be too "long winded", and allow a pause after the courtesy tone of the end of the message of the person that is in front of you in the rotation. Immediately pushing down your "push to talk" button as soon as the last guy is finished, is called "fast keying" and is never appreciated (if everyone "fast keyed", how would you ever have been heard when you threw out your call sign!). NEVER cut someone off by transmitting when someone else hasn't finished - this is considered a very bad practice and will not earn you any friends. Try to keep your place in the rotation and be mindful if others don't. When more than one person transmits simultaneously, it is called *doubling*, or even *tripling* and the results are not good for any of the people transmitting. If you end up rambling on and on and on... (you get the idea), you will experience the joy of a Repeater's time out feature. The Repeater will assume that your PTT (push to talk) button got stuck and you didn't intend to go on and on and on..., and will shut you down until you let go of the PTT button and let the Repeater reset. If it happens once in a while, don't worry too much about it. We all can get a little emotional with our conversations and lose touch with the time we're talking. But if it happens often, you might want to rethink your approach to FM Repeaters - are you talking *with* people or *at* people?

Some of the rules of etiquette are the same for a conversation anywhere. Don't tell the same joke over and over again just because you find it very funny - one single time is just fine. In general repeating yourself can get tiring to listen to. Unless you aren't readable, or the guy on the other end just doesn't understand, one explanation should be sufficient.

Some topics are like land mines - Religion, Politics, etc. Use caution when trading your opinions back and forth. It can be more interesting than discussing what you ate for lunch last Wednesday, or the weather conditions you experienced two days ago, or how bad your bunions are troubling you, but the conversation can descend into a shouting match under some circumstances. If all "*the players*" promise to play nice, almost any topic can be handled, politely.

There is something called "*an organ recital*" - it's when the conversation degenerates into an endless discussion of health issues, Diagnoses are detailed, along with the diet and medication schedule for each problem. This is great for a Doctor's Office, but this is a friendly Repeater. Sum your condition up in a few, simple and vague words, or even better yet, play the stoic and respond "I'm fine, how are you".

The subjects discussed on any particular Repeater any particular time is a product of the people talking on them. If you try to engage people talking about muscle cars into a conversation about rocket science you will usually be disappointed. You can give it a try if you wish, sometimes new topics can be successfully introduced into a Repeater group, but there's a reason why the same people are often talking about the same subjects.

Repeaters are a wonderful source for advice. But take it all *with a grain of salt*. Amateurs are not professionals. There are some gems out there that offer a lot of advice and 99.9999% of it is accurate and great. Some guys out there have a much lower percentage. It's a lot like asking directions, some guys will lead you off the end of a pier if you let them. I have a friend in this hobby that asks technical advice from guys that approach a negative percentile accuracy rate, because he feels even those Hams can randomly come up with some idea that is useful. There's an old Latin line, "*caveat emptor*", let the buyer beware. In our case the line should be "*let the listener beware*"! Double check the information offered until you get an idea of the other guy's breadth of knowledge.

In addition to technical advice, other Hams can offer help that does not require technical expertise, although they might be able to offer both. What I am alluding to is "*the sound*" of your rig on the air. Please don't ask what your "*RS*" or "*Signal Strength*" is on an FM Repeater. The signal strength is a function of the Repeater's transmitter, not yours. You can ask how "*you're getting into the radio*", whether you are getting into the Repeater with "*full quieting*", as well as the quality of your audio - are you "*swallowing the mike*"? Are you "*popping your P's*"? Are you over driving your audio gain to distortion, or under driving your audio and sound like you are whispering to everyone. FM isn't like AM or SSB - raising your output power won't increase your audio volume. Increasing your FM power might get you better audio quieting, but you have to learn to use your mic gain and position your microphone better to get your audio level better. You may want to play with frequency equalizer settings too, if you are able to. Find critical people, with critical ears. Polite "you sound great", even though you don't is kind, but not very productive. You should care about how you sound to others. Often it's much too similar to bad breath - few will broach the subject first with

you, but will be more than happy to complain about it with others. Don't be "*that guy with the awful audio*".

Some Hams have a curious practice. They will develop the habit of quick keying with another Ham back and forth on a given Repeater, uninterested in others joining into the conversation (made much more difficult due to the repeated quick keying). Might I suggest a relatively new invention for these people - the telephone! But seriously guys, take it to a simplex channel and leave the Repeater free for Repeater-type use, eh?

There are closed Repeaters out there - if you are not a member, you can listen, but they don't want to hear you on their Repeater. Their loss!

Then there are "*almost closed*" Repeaters. You can drop by once in a while to say hello, or throw in your two cents and you are always welcome on their Repeater Nets, but if you "*plant your flag*" and take up residence day and night, some Club official will, very politely, suggest that you either pay up, or go elsewhere.

Not all open Repeaters are completely open. Some will embrace a new voice on their Repeater but some will not. Again, it can be like recess in kindergarten. Sometimes "*the cool kids*" won't let you play with them. Their loss!

Beware of *The Dark Side Of The Force*. We can't be everybody's best buddy. Some personalities rub each other the wrong way, and in that situation, short conversation or no conversations are the best route. If you allow yourself to give vent to your darker side and jam those Hams that annoy you... Well, you know where this got Darth Vader.

Hams, like the general population can be thought to fall into two extremes (let's not discuss the happier people in the middle). There are the "*Grammar Police*", and there's the "*Its All Good, Guys*". There are people that correct you in mid sentence and others that can listen to people mutilate the somewhat arbitrary laws of English grammar and not give a "*hoot*".

Unfortunately, although it would be better for my blood pressure if I were one of the latter, I am more of one of those guys in the former group. Double negatives, as well as such acts of manslaughter to the English language like "*more betterer*" sound to me like nails screeching across a blackboard. In the end, everyone has to decide whether it makes any difference, or if "*its all good[sic]*".

There are etiquette *faux pas* that are not beloved on any radio modes and then there are practices that are meant for one mode that might be more tolerated in certain other modes.

Many *Grammar Police* suggest that FM Repeaters tend to be usually full quieting transmissions, with readability not being in question. They would question the use of phonetics in general, unless there is an obvious readability issue. Use of abbreviations as well as codes is a subject of frequent disagreement. It seems that "73" is the salutation that almost everyone exchanges with each other (some *creative* Hams have their own variation on

“73”). As far as “73”, it stands for “*best regards*”, so if you offer someone “73’s” it’s like saying “*best regardseses*” (you get the idea). No one seems to have a shack, or a location, instead they have things that they call QTH’s. They often use “*the royal we*”. I don’t know about youz guyz, but there ain’t no royalty here. Any royalty dere?

Q codes were designed to improve readability in CW, but bled over to the HF phone modes. Now it’s all over FM Repeaters. “I’m going to QRT, now”. QRM is very commonly used, sometimes like adults spelling in front of young “junior”, Hams use this as “secret code” for jammers. Let me let you in on a little secret - jammers know the usual Q codes too! Using QRM has some problems, it is easily mistaken for QRN on phone. Would the Universe cease to exist if we used “*interference*” and/or “*static*” for QRM and QRN respectively? Q codes are great on CW, they are nostalgic on HF, they just are unnecessary on FM Repeaters.”*QSL*”, “*Rodger, Rodger*”, “*Affirmatory*” versus “*yeah, sure*” ain’t no contest in my book! My favorite Q Code is QGG - I’m just waiting for a chance to use it somewhere on the air!

“*Negative response heard*” - how is this more understandable than “*No response heard*”, or “*Nothing heard*”. What’s the matter? Everyone watching too many Navy Seal themed action movies? I swear that I have heard “*Negatory*” used in a serious tone on a Repeater. Negatory? Really?

Here’s a travesty of the English language - the use of the phrase “*HI HI*” on Repeaters! If you are not doing this in a mocking tone there is no reason in this universe today to use “*HI HI*” on phones. It is one of the earliest *emoticons* in man’s history, used on CW, just as 21st Century *texters* use “*LOL*”. It is as if someone would interrupt their phone communication to insert “L-O-L”. Think what your reaction would be... That’s how most people feel when you shout out “*HI HI*” to the rest of us! If you hear something funny or say something funny, just LAUGH into the mic!

“*This is WC2XYZ, for identifying purposes*”? Usually when you transmit your call sign, it is *ASSUMED* to be for identifying purposes. Some Hams in a jocular mode might say something like “*this is WC2XYZ, if anyone still cares*” - humor is fine, robotic redundance for the sake of sounding more like a Professional Amateur (or is that Amateur Professional) is a waste of time for all involved! Remember to give your call sign when you start talking on the Repeater and every 10 minutes or so, and remember to say your 73, or similar, when you need to leave the group. You should try not *to disappear* from a conversation (unless your fuse blows!).

Another great line I recently heard on a local repeater was:

“I’ll just be clear on the side”

This roughly translates as “I’m turning my radio off, but I’ll still be listening to it while it’s off and will start talking some more, if I feel like it, possibly while the radio is still off.” I’m just speechless (as that guy should probably be much more often).

Regional accents are part of the pleasure of radio - just think how Hamlet would have sounded like, if he came from South Jersey, instead of, apparently, late Renaissance England:

Tah be, oaw nut tah be, dat iz de question;

Wedder itz nobla in de mind tah suffah
Da slings and dah arrowz of outrageous forchoon
Oar tah take ahms against a sea of troublez,
And by opposin', end dem...

This all is NOT to say that HF types are blameless. I have heard guys boast that they had SWR's of BETTER than 1:1?? And just the other day I heard this rather *oblique* exchange on the HF bands:

<insert some information here>, "QSL?

QSL, QSL! Yeah!"

<Now, all that is really necessary, right?>

These are all just suggestions. The FCC will never get on your case and jammers are not very grammar conscious. You get to be the one that decides what you sound like on the air. Choose wisely!

-The [Cranky] Editor-



Overstating Precision

(Guaranteed to be 97.306847% accurate!)

A Ham's Bedtime Story

Once upon a time there was a Ham that tended to overstate the precision of his numbers. This is not a sole, Ham-related problem, but a bigger problem in the general population. People often don't have their facts straight, and, even then, aren't aware of how precision is determined. How many times have you heard the bilge that "ya' know, day say we only use 10% of our brain's ability?" Well, aside from the fact that this is just nonsense, how would you measure a "brain's ability" and what units of measurements would you use (the μ Einstein, with the inverse units being the μ Mook, perhaps)?

"Your antenna system determines 80% of your station's ability"??? What the hell does that actually mean? Is it 80% or 80.0% or 80.0000000% or is it closer to 74.38953725%??? In fact, it is none of these. A station's "ability" is not an immutable repeatable, measurable quantity, it is an arbitrary assumption of differing individuals (i.e. what's the best flavor ice cream?). When cornered these people rationalize that the 80% is an approximation, or a "ballpark estimate" that is more easily understood than the vaguer "your antenna can be the most important aspect of your shack". But it strikes me as roughly 85% hyperbole on the adviser's part.

Precision is a REAL thing in the world of science and engineering. It does not mean that you arbitrarily extend the number of significant digits out to infinity to impress the other guy. Everyone has heard about Bird Watt meters. They have developed a reputation as a "gold standard" by which all other RF power meters are compared, and yet like any other piece of test equipment, they have their built in limitations of precision. Very often their slug-meter combinations are rated as $\pm 5\%$ of the meter's full scale. This would mean that if the full scale of a given meter is 100 watts, then, although the meter says 100 watts, it might be 95 watts or 105 watts. Most people have no problem with this, but if you try to explain that this also means that if the same meter is reading 5 watts of power it can in reality be anywhere from 0 watts to 10 watts. To me that doesn't seem very precise, but that's how all test equipment actually works! Error rates of these types of measuring devices are all relative to full deflection.

Another problem that people seem to have is that when you calculate a value from more than one initial measured value, the final result has the precision of the lowest value used to calculate it. As an example Power equals Current times voltage. 13.8 volts times 4.7 amps equals how many watts? Well, $13.8 \times 4.7 = 64.86$ right? But I only gave you the current to two places 4.7 amps. Not 4.70 or 4.700, but just a two digit 4.7, so the lowest precision number is two digits long - that means that $13.8 \text{ volts} \times 4.7 \text{ amps} = 65 \text{ watts} \pm$ the error range introduced by the two devices that measured the volts and the amps (we will spare you how to determine the calculated error range for another day). Most people will erroneously offer the answer of 64.86 because that's what their calculator tells them, real chuckleheads will tell you its 64.8600000000 because, apparently that's how many trailing zero's their calculator displays!

It's not only a matter of ability or inability to measure something, or the accuracy and precision of a given measurement (no, accuracy and precision are two different things - look them up if you don't believe me)!

Accuracy is random errors in a measuring device and precision is repeatable errors in a device. It's also a matter of knowing what (watt?) you actually want to measure. A Watt is a Watt is a Watt? Hell, no. There are devices that measure your "Peak" Watts, others that measure your "Average Watts" and still others that measure something called "RMS" (Root Mean Square) Watts. They are all useful but they all tell you something different about the device you are measuring!

Some values we play with every day in this hobby have no real fixed measurable value. This is unfortunately true of your "S" meter numbers. There is a recommended value for S9 being 50 microvolts of radio signal with each lower unit being 6 dB or 1/4th the power of the previous unit. Most manufacturers don't seem to care about this accepted value. Each manufacturer determines his own parameters from model to model and rarely calibrates all of one model to any precision. The bottom line is that you should consider your "S" meter values as relative numbers (i.e. S9 is much stronger than S5) but not rely too much on what the numbers are supposed to actually mean!

The moral of tonight's story is that you should use your head more and your calculators less.

So, if the next guy on the radio gives you a hard time when you don't tell him what your power output is to the nearest micro Watt tell him to read this article!

Pleasant dreams...

-Your [Cranky] Editor -

Closing statements (from the Editor):

Well, it's a another month, and this thing, I call our Club Newsletter, is still being written by me, myself, and let us never forget, I. Anyone else out there care to do anything with this "soapbox" (short of disparaging avocados)???? Come on guys, ya gotta have some ideas!?!?

For your ideas, your thoughts, your dreams, your kind words or even your epithets, I can be contacted at TheEditor@KC2RC.com .

- The Editor -